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ABSTRACT

This one- to three-week high school unit on Russian iconography was developed as part of a series by the Public Education Religion Studies Center at Wright State University. The unit can be incorporated into a larger unit on Russian literature, art, religion, or history. Four reasons for studying iconography are: 1) it is a splendid Russian art form; 2) it is the most significant Russian contribution to painting; 3) it gives insight into Russian religion and the Russian Orthodox Church; and, 4) it is a good example of religious influence upon art and artists. Generalizations, concepts, and vocabulary are briefly outlined. Thirteen cognitive objectives are identified, such as the student will be able to identify three general subjects of Russian icons. Eight affective objectives are identified, such as students will express a desire to visit the Soviet Union. Several activities are suggested including the viewing of films and discussion groups. Four different forms of evaluation are provided. These include student evaluation of the unit and teacher. A list of reference books, films, and recordings concludes the paper. (Author/BC)

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RUSSIAN ICONOGRAPHY: RUSSIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE ART OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION

prepared for
Secondary Humanities

by
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Russian Iconography

INTRODUCTION

This unit on Russian Iconography is created as a component that could fit into any number of units on Russia, Russian art, Russian religion, Russian literature, religious art, world religions, area studies, etc.

There are a number of reasons for getting students involved in a study of Russian Icons: 1. While iconography was begun elsewhere, the Russians developed it into a splendid art form. 2. It is the most significant contribution the Russians have made to the world of painting. 3. It can give insight into Christianity and the many stories that are a part of that religion as well as helping students to define the role of the saints in Christianity. 4. It can be used as a vehicle for getting to a study of the Russian Orthodox Church, its origin, its difference from the Roman Catholic Church, and its place in the Soviet state today. 5. It is one example of the use of art in religion and of the effects of religion upon art and artists.

This component could involve three to five class periods of a unit in which it is included or it might be expanded to involve two to three weeks' time. The amount of time involved would depend upon the detail emphasized and the number and/or type of activities used. I would recommend the unit for students grade 10 - 12 although a teacher could probably adapt it for grades 5 - 9 as it can be used to create interest in any number of larger units of study about Russia, art, or religion.

The course for which the Russian icon lessons were created is a humanities course involving the study of literature, art, music, and history of Western Civilization. Students will have studied art and music and their relationship to religion and literature and the events of history from prehistoric days through the eighteenth century before they study this unit on Russian Iconography.

CONTENT

A. Generalizations:
   1. Art is a valuable medium for the communication of religious stories and personalities, especially where people are unable to read.
   2. Religion was the dominant subject of art in the Middle Ages.
   3. The Russians (as individuals and in their churches) honored their saints by painting icons of them and identifying particular saints as their protectors.
   4. There is usually an established organizational pattern for the arrangement of works of art in a place of worship.
   5. Russian icons have been important in sustaining religious life even when it has been discouraged in the communist state.

6. Communism attempts to control the practice of religion.

B. Concepts:
1. Iconography
2. Sainthood
3. the Trinity
4. Symbolism in Christianity
5. Religion-State relationship
6. the Orthodox Church

C. Subject Matter to be Used:
1. Individual icons will be studied and the stories represented by each will be related:
Nativity
Virgin and Child
Annunciation
Assumption
Trinity
Entombment
St.George and the Dragon
St. Boris and St. Gleb
St. Nicholas
Prophet Elijah
St.John the Divine
Metropolitan Alexey
St.John Chrysostom
St.Basil the Great
the Apocalypse
Archangel Michael
Archangel Gabriel
Dormition of the Virgin
possibly others
2. Pictures of various iconostasis from Russia will be studied for:
   a. overall visual effects
   b. analysis of the organization of icons on the screen
3. Films of the exteriors of the cathedrals of the Kremlin and the Novodevichy Monastery in Moscow will be shown.
4. The films The Kremlin and Religion in Russia will be shown.
5. A discussion will take place where the students will make comparisons and contrasts of the Russian use of icons with the Roman Catholic use of stained glass windows and sculpture.
6. Through lecture the students will become acquainted with the following:
   a. the difference in the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church
   b. the place of the church and religion in the Soviet Union today
   c. the techniques of iconography and the process used in the last century to classify and restore icons

d. the various schools of iconography
e. the use of icons in the home by individuals and families

D. Vocabulary:
1. Icon
2. Iconostasis
3. Annunciation
4. Assumption
5. Transfiguration
6. Dormition
7. Patriarch

OBJECTIVES

A. Cognitive Behaviors I expect the students to be able to exhibit at the conclusion of this study:
1. The student will be able to identify three general subjects of Russian icons.
2. Given certain specific pictures of Russian icons the student will be able to identify the subjects of the icons and the religious symbols pictured in the icons.
3. The student will analyze the organization of icons on the iconostasis.
4. The student will compare the Russian iconostasis with the Roman Catholic stained glass window.
5. The student, when comparing Russian icons of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries with religious paintings from the Mediterranean world of the same period, will point out the contrast in use of color, in facial expressions, in realistic representations of human anatomy.
6. The student will list the steps involved in creating an icon.
7. The student will explain the problems involved in icon restoration.
8. The student will identify the roles of the saints in the public and private worship of the Russian Orthodox people.
9. The student will write a well-developed essay on the use of art in religion in which he uses the Russian icons as one example.
10. The student will explain how the art of icon painting has been kept alive in the enamel paintings using Russian folklore for subjects.
11. The student will explain the role of schools of iconography and the effect having such schools has had on the iconography of Russia.
12. The student will explain the differences in the Russian Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church.
13. The student will discuss the place of religion in the Soviet state today.

B. Affective Behaviors I would like the students to exhibit:
1. Students will demonstrate their interest in the Russian icons by pointing out certain elements or objects in the paintings and by asking questions about them.

2. Students will make comparisons between the various icons they see and other works of art seen in previous lectures and state preferences.
3. Students will express a liking for the colors in some icons and the facial expressions in some and the activity in some.
4. Students will express appreciation for the dilemmas of the people who have to decide to destroy an icon in order to restore another icon underneath.
5. Students will demonstrate that they value the skills of those who identify, codify, and restore icons by asking questions about how they do this.
6. Students will ask if there are any churches nearby where we could see real examples of icons.
7. Students will question the source of the information about the church in the Soviet Union today.
8. Students will express a desire to visit the Soviet Union.

POSSIBLE ACTIVITIES

A. Possible Initiatory Activities:
   1. Viewing of the film Religion in Russia (Russian Series) i.f.f.
   2. A media center research assignment: Divide the class into small groups and assign each group a saint from the Russian Orthodox tradition. Have the students find out who the saint was, what the person did to deserve sainthood, and the particular area of life or religion the saint is usually associated with:
   3. A pre-assessment test: the following is an example of a quick test that could be given:
      1. What do the following have in common?
         Michael
         Gabriel
      2. What title is used to complete the names of the following?
         Nicholas
         Boris
         George
         Basil
         John
      3. What word communicates the role of each of these men in their societies?
         Elijah
         Isaiah
         Jeremiah
      4. Define any of the following terms that you recognize:
         1. icon
         2. orthodox
         3. transfiguration
         4. dormition
         5. idolatry
         6. annunciation
         7. assumption

B. Activities to be used during the unit:
   1. Slide presentations of individual icons and iconostases
      a. lecture
      b. questions and answers
      c. discussion of icons being seen
   2. Small group examination of icons where slides are not available or as an additional activity where they are available.
      a. divide the class into groups of four or five
      b. set up stations with a book at each station with certain icons designated to be studied and a form sheet with questions to be answered concerning each icon examined.
      c. when groups have completed work at one station, rotate them to the next station.
   3. Bring in a guest speaker who is from the Soviet Union or has visited the Soviet Union. It would be a good idea to have clarified what the speaker can share with the students. If the speaker has no particular knowledge of the Russian Orthodox Church or of iconography, then be sure the students understand that they are having the speaker only for the purpose of giving them additional information and an idea of what the Soviet Union is like today.
   4. Take a field trip to an Eastern Orthodox Church.
   5. After the students have some knowledge of icons and the Russian Orthodox religion, view the movie The Kremlin. This movie has many interior shots of the icons and iconostasis of the Kremlin cathedrals. (It would be good to use a projector that has a stop position on it so you can stop and look at some of the views and/or go back and run them through again.) This film also gives a good summary of the history of the czars from Ivan the Great to the Revolution and Lenin's rise to power.
   6. Research reports (oral and/or written):
      a. lives of the saints
      b. stories of the Bible often depicted in icons
      c. prophets and patriarchs often depicted in icons
      d. the Doctrine of Images of the Eastern Orthodox Churches
      e. the Russian Orthodox Church
      f. the Russian Orthodox Church in the modern Soviet Union

EVALUATION

A. A test is an appropriate method of evaluation for this unit. The length and type of test should be determined by the segment of time given to the unit. The students should be able in an objective test to identify some of the icons by title or subject. If significant time is spent on analyzing the structure of the iconostasis, then several questions concerning location of types of icons on the screen would also be appropriate. If the time involved allows for essay writing, then a comparison-contrast question on the Russian iconostasis and the Roman Catholic stained glass window could be given. An essay could be given on the role the icon plays in the orthodox religion. Any of the cognitive objectives could be used as a base for an essay question.

B. I will evaluate student participation by:
   1. observing the questions asked and contributions made during the lectures
   2. evaluating the written tests and essays

C. I will include questions on the evaluation form that we use at the end of the course:
   1. Were art lectures clear?
   2. Did use of transparencies and movies help to increase your understanding of the slides of works of art studied?
   3. Was the unit on Russian iconography informative?
      Not at all
      A little
      Somewhat
      Quite
   4. Did the study of Russian iconography expand your knowledge of the Russian Orthodox Church?
      Not at all
      A little
      Somewhat
      Yes, a great deal
   5. I found the study of Russian iconography
      A waste of time
      Boring
      OK
      Interesting
      Fascinating

D. Normally I can evaluate my role as teacher by the way the class responds to the lecture-discussion in art. If they don't like the way I'm doing things, they usually say so. Also, through informal discussion after the lecture, I can find out how the students feel about the presentation.

INSTRUCTIONAL RESOURCES

A. Printed materials (Included below are three types of books that are needed to prepare this unit. Teachers will find them helpful and students will need them if any of the research assignments suggested are given.)

1. Books on Iconography

Alpatov, M.W. Art Treasures of Russia. New York: Harry Abrams, Inc., 1967. *

Duncan, David. The Kremlin. Greenwich, Ct: New York Graphic Society, 1960. *

Froncek, Thomas, Ed. The Horizon Book of the Arts of Russia. New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc., 1970.

Gerhard, H.P. The World of Icons. New York: Harper and Row, 1971.

Kaganovich, Abram. Arts of Russia. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1968. *

Lasareff, Victor. Russian Icons from the Twelfth to the Fifteenth Century. New York: Mentor-Unesco Art Book, 1962. *

*Books which will be useful if students are to study the icons through pictures in books rather than with slides.

Rice, Tamara Talbot. Russian Icons. London: Spring Books, 1963. *

Rice, David and Tamara Talbot. Icons and Their History. Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 1974.

Schweinfurth, Phillip. Russian Icons. New York: Oxford University Press, 1953.

Skrobuche, Heinz. Icons. Philadelphia: Dufour Editions, 1965.

Soloukhin, Vladimer. Searching for Icons in Russia. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc. 1971.

Stuart, John. Ikons. London: Faber and Faber, 1975. *

Wallace, Robert, Ed. Rise of Russia, Great Ages of Man Series. New York: Time-Life Inc. 1967.

2. Books on religion in Russia/Soviet Union

Benz, Ernst. The Eastern Orthodox Church: Its Thought and Life. Garden City, NY.: Doubleday and Co. 1963.

Bourdeaux, Michael. The Evidence that Convicted Aida Skripnikova. Elgin, Il.: David C. Cook Publishing Co. 1972.

Brumberg, Abraham, Ed. In Quest of Justice. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1970. This book has an interesting chapter on "Freedom of Worship and the Law."

Deyneka,Jr., Anita and Peter. Christians in the Shadow of the Kremlin. Elgin, Il.: David C. Cook Publishing Co. 1974.

Fedotov, G.P. The Russian Religious Mind. Cambridge,Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1966.

Froncek, Thomas, Ed. The Horizon Book of the Arts of Russia. New York: American Heritage Publishing Co., Inc. 1970.

Hindus, Maurier. The Kremlin's Human Dilemma. Garden City, NY.: Doubleday and Co., 1967.

Iswolsky, Helene. Christ in Russia. Milwaukee: Bruce Publishing Co., 1960.

Parker, W.H. The Russians: How They Live and Work. New York: Praeger Publishers, 1973.

Schmemann, Alexander. The Historical Road of Eastern Orthodoxy. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1966.

*Books which will be useful if students are to study the icons through pictures in books rather than with slides.

Soloview, Alexander. Holy Russia, the History of a Religious-Social Idea. Gravenhage: Moulton and Co., 1959.

Struve, Nikita. Christians in Contemporary Russia. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1967.

Ware, Timothy. The Orthodox Church. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1967.

3. Books for general background on Russia/Soviet Union

Carmichael, Joel. A Cultural History of Russia. New York: Weybright and Talley, 1968.

Clarkson, Jesse D. A History of Russia. New York: Random House, 1969.

Geyer, Georgie Anne. The Young Russians. Homewood, Il.: ETC Publications, 1975.

Kaiser, Robert G. Russia: The People and the Power. New York: Atheneum Publishers, 1976.

Klein, Mina and Klein, H. Arthur. The Kremlin: Citadel of History. New York: Macmillan, 1973.

Smith, Hedrick. The Russians. New York: New York Times Book Co., 1976.

U.S.S.R. Vol. I and II, Illustrated Library of the World and Its People. New York: Greystone Press, 1969.

B. Audio-Visual Aids

1. Films

"The Kremlin," NBC, available from many film distributors, rental $23.00, University of Illinois, No. 81047 color.

"Religion in Russia," (Russia Series) I.F.F. rental $10.00 University of Illinois, No.53044 color.

2. Recordings

"The Music of Russia," Meloduya/Horizon.

"Russian Eastern Liturgy," Monitor MFC 441 (This recording features the Russian Orthodox Cathedral Choir of Paris, conducted by Peter Spassky.)

"Russian Hymns and Chants," Monitor MFC 366.

"Russian Sacred Choral Masterpieces," Monitor MFS 468.

"Vespers and Matins, Potorjinsky's Russian Choir," Westminster Gold Series, No.8150.